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MEMORANDUM CONCERNING STATUS OF GUYANA BODIES ON DOVER AIR FORCE BASE

ENTIFIED BODIES

There are presently 635 identified bodies; 282 have been released as of 8 Jan 79 and 353 are still on hand.

ath certificates
hand

The State Department presently has 608 death certificates for the identified on hand and expects to have all 635 in hand by the end of the week. (Guyana has agreed to provide death certificates for all identified bodies).

ick-up slowed by
osecutions in New
ersey and Governor
Pont's request to
esident to transport
odies to West coast

Several cremations were held in New Jersey when pick-ups by morticians began and this has lead to the prosecution of Mr. Bill Torbert, a mortician who was involved in the New Jersey cremation, and possibly others, by the State Mortuary Board. Mr. Torbert, the prime offender, has been charged with approximately 30 counts of improper burial by the State Attorney General. The Attorney General has indicated he recommended leniency in this matter to the Mortuary Board. The hearing will be held on 9 Jan 1979. We will not know until after this hearing is completed what will happen to Torbert and the other morticians. Until this is resolved no pick-ups for cremation are expected to be made as New Jersey is the only jurisdiction which has permitted cremation to date. (Note: Mr. Torbert has indicated to State Department that he is hopeful of a positive result and expects to be permitted to continue to cremate in New Jersey after the hearing. For his hearing Mr. Torbert was provided with a statement by Mr. Carson stating that the bodies did not present a health hazard. (This was done with consent of AFGC). He was also given two statements from the State Department, the first, requesting the State (New Jersey) permit cremation in New Jersey and the second, stating death certificates will be forthcoming).

The second reason many of the identified bodies have not been claimed up to now is due to the fact that Governor DuPont, at the direction of the State Department, has held off going public with the news that his request for military shipment of bodies to West coast has been turned down. Many next of kin did not want to spend money if the Government was going to handle the shipment. However at the present time the West coast knows there will be no transportation of bodies and the State Department has undertaken a letter-writing campaign to the next of kin encouraging them to claim the bodies. State Department has notified Social Security and VA and they, too, are attempting to notify next of kin. Letters are being sent by the State Department notifying next of kin of what financial assistance is available for them to assist in burying the deceased.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY _____ DATE _____
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE _____ REASON (S) _____
TS AUTH. _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

eeting with State
f Delaware

A meeting between State of Delaware and State Department is set for 1100 hours on 10 January 1979 to discuss burial in Delaware now that death certificates have been obtained. This meeting will be attended by Dover SJA on behalf of USAF.

NIDENTIFIED AND
NCLAIMED BODIES

There are presently 278 unidentified bodies.

o decision until
ebruary

There will be no decision forthcoming from the State Department concerning the unclaimed or unidentified bodies until some time in February at the earliest. This is due to the fact that both the mayor of San Francisco and Los Angeles have task force organizations to assist families of the deceased which have volunteered to and are now canvassing all hospitals in both cities with the names of the deceased children and wherever any medical records are found they are being forwarded to the Air Force Institute of Pathology. So far approximately 40 records have been found. Further, FBI is hopeful that there are at least 90 additional sets of prints still forthcoming from Guyana to assist in the identification process.

no cremation

The State Department has made a final decision that the unclaimed or unidentified bodies will not be cremated. (Note: This is close-hold information - not for public dissemination at this time).

burial in local
states expected

State Department has notified the states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland and New Jersey concerning the burial of the unclaimed and unidentified. So far, based on telephonic conversation, the states of Pennsylvania and Virginia have indicated there will be no difficulty in burying the bodies there. Letter confirmation has been requested but has not been received.

all bodies should
be gone by
mid-March

Should burial be permitted in Pennsylvania and Virginia the State Department hopes (absent further ID leads) to complete burial of all unclaimed or unidentified by mid-March. Toward this end the State Department has requested that the Dover AFB Legal Office to provide the State Department with an outline on how DOD would secure local cemetery space in an area where there is no national cemetery. This was requested because the State Department is seeking guidance on how to evaluate cemetery offers since this is a new tasking for them and they have no internal operating procedures to follow. The Legal Office is presently researching this procedure.

ROBERT E. GIOVAGNONI, Major, USAF
Staff Judge Advocate